



Case Services...

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How Do I...Know What USCIS Services Are Available to Me After I File My Application or Petition?



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

M-620(July 2005)

While our primary focus is on processing applications and petitions, we still offer a variety of services after you file. This fact sheet has three sections:

- Case services while your case is pending with us—see page 1
- Case services for new permanent residents—see page 3
- Case services if your case has already been approved or denied—see page 3

Case services while your case is pending with us

Processing times and case status

To be fair to all of our customers, we process cases that are the same type based on the order of when they were filed. We will notify you, usually by mail, when we make a decision on your case, or if we need something from you.

Want an idea of how long it will take us to process your case?

The easiest way to monitor our processing time is on our website, where we post the filing dates of cases that we are now completing. We list this information for each kind of case and for every USCIS office and service center. This lets you project how long it will be before your case is completed.

As you use this information, keep in mind that this **processing time is not just a projection of how long it will take to process your case from start to finish. It is a projection of how long it will take to process cases that were filed before yours, and then process yours.**

Processing times can change as we process cases. We update our information as we process cases. **So, if you don't hear from us within the processing time based on what we are completing now, just check our website, or call customer service for updated processing time information.**

Most of the time a case is pending we will be working on other cases filed earlier. But many customers still want to be able to track the processing of their case. So, we assign receipt numbers to each case that we process in our service centers and, in fact, to most new cases.

- The receipt number is simply an inventory control number assigned to a case. It starts with three letters, such as "VSC," and then has a series of numbers. If your case was assigned a receipt number, you will find it on the receipt notice or biometrics appointment notice that we mail you about the case.

You can use your receipt number on our website, or when you call customer service, to get **basic** case status information from our automated systems to supplement the information about processing times.

- **With your receipt number, you can also register on our website to get automatic case status updates as we process your case.**

Please keep several things in mind if you choose to use your receipt number to check case status and track the processing of your case.

- First, most of the time your case is pending we will be processing cases that were filed before yours. Therefore, the status of your case may not change until we get to the end of the normal processing time.
- Second, our focus is on processing cases because we understand the effect processing times have on customers. The case status information we offer is fairly basic. While your case is within the normal processing time, this basic automated case status is all that we will provide. We will not research your case to give you details about the status of your case.

The ability to track case processing is only available to customers whose cases have a receipt number. We manage other cases based on your account number, which is often called an A-number. These start with an "A," followed by an eight or nine digit number. For these cases, you can monitor processing time for the type of case, but you cannot track the processing of your particular case.



Services available to you anytime while your case is pending with us

While we will not research the status of a case that is within the normal processing time, we do offer a variety of case services while your case is pending with us.

- **If you move**, call customer service about updating your address.
- **If you filed a Form I-130, *Petition for Alien Relative*, as a permanent resident, and then became a U.S. citizen**, see our website, or call customer service about upgrading your petition.
- **If you find an error** in the information on the last notice we sent you, call customer service for assistance. If you find an error on a document we issued, you will have to file an application to replace it, and you will have to return the document when you apply. If the error was the caused by the service and you can prove it, you may be able to file an application without a fee.
- **If you mailed** your application or petition more than 30 days ago to a Service Center or to our National Benefit Center, and have not yet received a receipt in the mail, call customer service for assistance.
- **If you did not get any other kind of notice**—and you have a receipt number, and case status on our website states that we sent you a notice (other than the receipt notice) more than 14 days ago, but you haven't yet received it, call customer service.
- **If you filed several related cases together**, such as different applications for the same person, or for family members, or for a group of workers, and received a decision about some of the cases but not the others, and are concerned the companion cases may have been separated, check our online status system, or call customer service.
- **If you submitted original documents with your case**, we recommend you wait until the case is finished to ask for them back because we may need them at some point, and it will delay your case if we have to come back to you for the originals. However, understanding this, if you want to request documents be returned to you while your case is pending, call customer service for assistance.
- **If you have a pending Form I-129, *Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker***, and you need to change the names of persons you included on the petition, or you need to change the consulates or ports of entry where the individuals will apply for their visa or entry, call customer service for assistance.
- **If you absolutely cannot make it to a scheduled interview that we requested**, call customer service before the interview date as far in advance as possible. However, please understand that rescheduling can delay processing. We will only reschedule if emergency reasons outside your control prevent you from keeping your appointment. Certain kinds of interviews cannot be rescheduled. When you call customer service, you will need to explain the reason that makes it impossible for you to keep your appointment. The office where your interview was scheduled will make the decision about whether to grant your request to change your appointment, and will notify you directly.

If your case is outside our current processing time

The processing times that we publish let you estimate how long it will take us to process cases filed before yours, and then process your case. However, every case is different and sometimes an individual case can take longer than average.

If you don't hear from us within the normal processing time, check for updated processing times on our website. If your case has a receipt number, use it to check on the status of your case at the same time. We recommend this action on your part because our notice may be on its way to you.

If at any point your case should become more than 30 days outside our normal processing time, and you haven't received a written decision or update from us within the last 60 days, you can help us by calling customer service and letting us know. We will research your case, see what needs to be done to get it processed, and get back to you with an explanation.

- The extra 30 days is to allow time for any notice from us to reach you as we process your case.

If you filed a **Form I-765, *Application for Employment Authorization***, and it has been longer than 90 days since you filed and you haven't gotten an update from us within the last 60 days, and have not seen any public notice that addresses your case type, please don't wait the extra 30 days. Call customer service immediately.

Accelerated processing

Understanding the circumstances that cause certain types of applications to be filed, we prioritize certain kinds of cases. Those priorities are already reflected in our processing times.

We also have a premium processing program that lets you judge your own circumstances and decide if you want to pay for faster processing. We know that circumstances can change, so this program is available even after you file.

- At this time, this program is only available for most kinds of temporary worker petitions (filed on Form I-129). For more information, see our website, or call customer service.
- **At the time this Fact Sheet was printed, no other kind of case can receive premium processing.**

For all other kinds of cases, customers who file the same kind of application are usually in similar circumstances and often have similar needs to have their case processed quickly. We understand the effects our processing times can have on customers, and we are working hard to shorten processing time. It would not be appropriate for us to give preferential treatment to one customer over another, and disadvantage you or others by delaying one case to first process another that was filed later. Therefore, no matter how short or long the normal processing time, **we normally process cases in order based on when they were received.**

However, we recognize that truly extraordinary things can happen. Even when "Premium Processing" is not available, we will consider taking a case out of order if there is a life or death emergency, or the equivalent, if our processing the case out of order will have a direct effect on the situation. To be fair to everyone, we are very restrictive in granting this kind of preferential treatment, in part because it means other customers have to wait longer. By definition, most kinds of applications and petitions rarely, if ever, merit this kind of preferential treatment. But if you believe such a situation exists when you file a case, or develops while your case is pending, call customer service for information about how to request accelerated



processing, and about what documents and evidence you will have to submit to show that a “life or death” emergency exists.

Case services for new permanent residents

After you enter the United States (U.S.) with an immigrant visa, or are granted permanent residence in the U.S., we will register your new status and send you a welcome notice with valuable information. We then will mail you your new Permanent Resident Card.

The post office cannot forward your card. If there is a name other than yours on the mailbox you use to get your mail, the post office will not deliver your card. In either of these situations, they will return your card to us as undeliverable.

- **If you move before you get your card,** notify your post office, but also call our customer service number to update your address and emphasize when calling that you are waiting for your card.
- **If you are living with someone else,** and that person's name is on the mailbox, we recommend you add your name to the mailbox, or you run the risk the post office will return your card to us as undeliverable.
- **If you became a permanent resident more than 30 days ago and still have not received your welcome notice,** call customer service.
- **If you find an error in your welcome notice,** call customer service.
- **If you receive your welcome notice, but do not get your card within 30 days after you receive our welcome notice,** call customer service.

If you became a permanent resident while already in the U.S. instead of entering with an immigrant visa, and your husband/wife and/or unmarried minor children are still overseas, in some circumstances you can file a **Form I-824, Application for Action on Approved Application or Petition**. This will allow us to tell a U.S. Consulate about your new permanent resident status, so your family can apply for immigrant visas to join you. For more information, check our website, or call customer service.

For information about other products and services available to you as a permanent resident, refer to our fact sheets about services for permanent residents, or check our website. You can also call customer service and:

- select option 4, which is for forms, information about status, benefits, services, and products; and
- then select option 3, benefits and services for permanent residents.

Case services if your case has already been approved or denied

We have several case services available to you, even after your application or petition has been completed:

- **If you move** after we approve your application or petition, and:
 - If you are waiting for documents from us based on your approved application, call customer service.

- If your immigrant visa petition was approved, and you or the person you filed the petition for moved before an immigrant visa was issued, notify the Department of State's National Visa Center (NVC) directly, so they will have current addresses when it comes time for the person to apply for an immigrant visa.

Also, please remember that unless you are a U.S. citizen, you must always report any change of address. Use **Form AR-11, Change of Address**, or **Form AR-11SR, Change of Address Special Registration**. This is separate from updating the address on your application or petition. See our website, or call customer service for assistance.

- **If you find an error** on a notice or document we sent you, call customer service.
- **If our systems indicate that we approved or denied your case more than 14 days ago,** and you have not received our approval or denial notice, call customer service for assistance.
- **To get a duplicate of an approval notice for your records,** file an I-824 application. The duplicate will simply be a copy of the original notice. We cannot make changes, and will not reissue any documents that we issued when we approved your case. Check our website, or call customer service for information.
- **If we approved your case more than 30 days ago and you have not received the follow-up documents we normally issue after approving such a case,** call customer service.
- **If we approved your form I-129, nonimmigrant worker petition:**
 - If we approved it more than a week ago, but the U.S. Consulate has not yet received our notification, call customer service.
 - If you now need us to notify a different consulate of the approval, file an I-824 application. See our website, or call customer service for information.
- **If we approved your I-130, relative petition, or other immigrant petition,** and you indicated in the petition that the person would apply for permanent resident status here in the U.S., but that has changed, you can file a form I-824 to ask us to ship your petition to the Department of State's National Visa Center (NVC) for immigrant visa processing. See our website, or call customer service for information.
- **If you became a U.S. citizen after we approved your I-130 relative petition,** and want to upgrade it:
 - If the petition is already with the U.S. Department of State's NVC, send a copy of your naturalization certificate to the NVC with a cover letter explaining your request. In your letter, be sure to give the case number, and the name and date of birth of the person for whom you filed the petition.
 - If our approval notice indicated that we were keeping the petition, then to upgrade it, you should file an I-824 application; or if a visa number is immediately available for the person for whom you filed the petition, if he or she is otherwise eligible, have him or her file an application with us for permanent residence.



For the preceding procedures that involve the U.S. Department of State's NVC, the mailing address is:

National Visa Center,
32 Rochester Avenue,
Portsmouth, NH 03801-2909

The NVC's phone number is 603-334-0700;
the fax number is 603-334-0791; and
the e-mail address is **NVCINQUIRY@state.gov**.

Key Information

Key forms referenced in this Fact Sheet	Form #
Petition for Alien Relative	I-130
Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker	I-129
Application for Employment Authorization	I-765
Application for Action on Approved Application or Petition	I-824
Change of Address	AR-11
Change of Address Special Registration	AR-11SR

USCIS

- **On the Internet at: uscis.gov**

For more copies of this Fact Sheet, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start! If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your library. If you can't find what you need, call customer service.

- **Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283**

- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is a basic guide to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, see our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.

This Fact Sheet reflects case services available as of the date of publication. Check our website for up to date information regarding case services.

Other U.S. Government Services—click or call

In general	www.firstgov.gov	1-800-333-4636
U.S. Department of State	www.state.gov	1-202-647-6575
National Center for Health Statistics	www.cdc.gov	1-800-311-3435

